3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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that had been built up when horses were rare were such that horses remained almost wholely prestige tokens and transport bearers. 262

Great numbers of cattle obtained from raids on Mexican and Texas settlements were also eaten, especially in later years. The majority were butchered and consumed by the raiders wherever they were found, or as soon as the raider felt himself at a distance safe from attack by the whites. The Comanches made no attempt to herd them. Many head of stolen cattle were not butchered, but went to New Mexican traders in return for ornaments, arrows, kettles, and other articles. Although the Comanches thought beef was poor eating when buffalo was to be had, nowadays an old Comanche likes to sink his teeth into mediocre beef with plenty of fat as the nearest thing to the buffalo he loved.

Dog meat was regarded as an almost sacred dish by the Sioux, and to the Cheyennes "A nice fat, boiled puppy is just like a turkey on Thanksgiving to you white people."[2] But the Comanches did not eat dog meat. Medicine Woman says it is because "Once, when the people moved, they left an old, old lady in camp with a dog. Several weeks later when the people returned to the site, they found that the dog had killed the woman and had consumed most of her body. Henceforth the Comanches refused dog meat, since dogs ate human flesh."[3] There is a deeper reason, however. Dog is Coyote's cousin, and Coyote is tabu. He is the Trickster of Comanche and Shoshone mythology—a demi-god. Although coyotes were occasionally hunted for their furs, they were never eaten or wantonly killed. Post Oak Jim shot one for the fun of it once when out on a cattle raid. Came a cyclone, and Jim thought his horse was spinning on its head; it rained all night, and in the morning it was so cold they nearly froze. "That coyote's mother probably made medicine," said Jim. "Coyote has medicine. If we harm one, it will get back on us some way." 262 776 825

The same with dogs. Post Oak Jim killed a dog once, and ever after he thinks he had bad luck with his children. They all got sick and died. In 1933 Howard White Wolf had a dozen curs on his place. He did not dare to kill them himself, but he asked a member of the Santa Fé Laboratory of Anthropology group to do it for him. White 776 825

[2] E. A. Hoebel, Cheyenne Field Notes (unpublished).
[3] Informant: Medicine Woman.

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776 825 men are immune to dog medicine—or at least White Wolf was willing to let a white chance it! As they feel thus about dogs, it is hardly surprising that the Comanches will not eat them.

262 Although wild fowl and fish were plentiful, they were not eaten except when food was very scarce, for fish were tabu, and it was common belief that those who ate the turkey would become cowardly and run from their enemies just as the turkey flees from his pursuers. Frogs and swine were also tabu; frogs because, like fish, they were water animals, and swine because they were associated with mud and water. The Comanches, if they knew it, would eat nothing cooked with hog lard.

266 The Comanches did not eat human flesh. The neighboring Tonkawas, whom the Comanches found in Texas, were loathed and detested because of their cannibalistic practices. The fact of cannibalism is the chief rationalization used by the Comanches in explaining their implacable enmity for the Tonkawas. Like many moral excuses for war, this one, too, seems to come after the fact, since prior to the nineteenth century, when the Tonkawas were busy fighting the Apaches, the Comanches got on well enough with them.[4] It is quite probable that the Comanches themselves were not at all unused to the idea of cannibalism in the early days of their southward migration. That some people will turn cannibal in starvation times is accepted by the Shoshones, although cannibals were reputedly hanged because once having tasted human flesh they acquired an insatiable appetite.[5] Among the Comanches, however, the very idea that one of them might under stress eat another person was vigorously repulsed.

266 In late winter food sometimes became scarce; neither buffalo, deer, antelope, nor elk could be obtained. The shortages were more likely to occur in February and March, the season designated by a term meaning "when the babies cry for food."[6] When food became scarce, a Comanche ate almost anything—the tabued fish and fowl, rabbits, terrapins, turtles, snakes, skunks, rats, lizards, grasshoppers, meats which were no longer fresh, roots, and bark.

000 In the preparation of food, meat was generally cooked by holding

[4] H. E. Bolton, "Tonkawa," in Hodge, *Handbook*, II, 783.

[5] Hoebel, *The Political Organization and Law-Ways of the Comanche Indians*, Appendix A, 141.

[6] Informant: Medicine Woman.

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787 what might come. He was not arrogant toward the helping powers—far from it—he was grateful for the help they could extend to him. He knew that he could not well do without that help, but was confident that it was forthcoming. The spirits were beneficent. They gave of their power, not in compassion but in altruism.

●776 The regular pattern called for the candidate to remain at his soli-
787 tary watch for four days and nights, but the quest might be prolonged. He remained until he received a vision, or else abandoned the quest to try again at a later time when conditions were more propitious. The vigil was completed with a vision or hallucination which made known to the candidate his personal and individual magic medium, the mysterious bond between him and that supernatural power which would henceforth act as the helping guardian of his destiny. A wind rustling through a pass or the timber, the bark of a dog, the howl of a wolf, the scream of an eagle might end the quest and send the candidate home to offer thanks to his newly found guardian spirit.

The newly acquired guardian spoke and understood the language of his ward and possessed special attributes or powers which it could transfer. On the fourth night of his search, Yellowfish heard a voice as distinctly, he vows, as if some person were standing near and speaking to him. "Tomorrow morning go take a bath in the creek below, and then go towards the east until you see a one-year-old buffalo coming across a ravine." He followed the instructions minutely and met the one-year-old buffalo crossing the ravine. Thereafter Yellowfish possessed the medicine of the one-year-old buffalo.[3]

784 During the revelation, the guardian spirit emphasized certain
787 tabus and procedures which his ward must carefully follow; otherwise the medicine either would not work or would cause evil. Medicine is power, and power is not to be handled casually. Among tabus commonly noted was one in connection with medicine men's eating certain foods, or at least eating them only under certain conditions. Should anyone walk behind a medicine man while he was eating, he was certain to become ill or lose his power, unless he had "heap big medicine."[4] All medicines had to be protected from grease and the ill effects of menstruating women. Eagle medicine men could not per-

[3] Informant: Yellowfish.
[4] Informant: Medicine Woman.

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775 them. He dropped the paunch and seized the arms fast, so he could carry the ghost on his back.

The people heard him coming. They heard the squeaking of the bones.

"Coward, what are you doing out there?" they called. "Bring us that water."

He just threw the skeleton in at them. They all fled and fell in a heap. The ghost disappeared.

That night it came back to the young man. It gave him medicine.

"You will be hard to hit," it told him. "Bullets will never kill you. Keep a ball of white clay with you. When there is going to be a fight, paint yourself white all over."

"Never go into the battle first. Wait until your friends retreat. Then go right in."

The next day the party went on. They made a good raid on a herd of Mexican horses, but the Mexican pursuit caught up with them. The battle started. He went off to one side to prepare himself. Another young man came up to ask for the protection of his medicine. He gave him some and told him how to wait.

At the right time, they charged, and they turned the tide by killing several Mexicans. After that he became a famous warrior. » » »

754 775 Sorcery with ghost medicine is supposed to cause paralysis. In a case of epilepsy, recounted by Breaks Something, a medicine man with power over ghosts was called in. He looked at the patient and said, "This disease has nothing to do with ghosts; it is not in my line; must be something else." He could not help this sickness; it seemed to be something inside of the sick man.

● 776 Another source of great power for the Comanches, and Shoshones, too, lay in the "little men"—the *nɜnəpi*. They were believed to be no more than a foot high. They were armed with little shields, bows, and arrows, which killed every time they shot. They also threw little spears with points made of alligator spines. The Comanches say that the *nɜnəpi* made all the little stone arrowheads that they found all around. A few daring medicine men sought power from the little men, but most people did not want to possess it, for it was too dangerous: a man might kill someone when he did not want to kill.

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The Search for Power

The Shoshone notion that *nɜnəpi* power gives Herculean strength (a little man can pack a deer on his back) seems to have been dropped by the Comanches. At least, it was not mentioned.

Comanche religious beliefs and practices, although they were socialized, remained almost wholly individualistic. Group rituals were few and far between until the introduction of the peyote cult.

Of group rituals practiced in the mid-nineteenth century by the Comanches, we know of only two—the Beaver Ceremony and the Eagle Dance. The Sun Dance was not tried until 1874, and that, apparently, no more than once.

The Beaver Ceremony is known as *pianahuwait*, "Big Doctoring." It was performed under the direction of a powerful beaver medicine man assisted by others with beaver power. Other people joined in the ceremony to share in its general effects of well-being, although the cure was held only at the request of a family who had a member suffering from tuberculosis or sorcery.

An extra-large tipi was raised and carefully prepared inside. Placed erect in the very center of the lodge was the trunk of a cottonwood tree, which reached to the top of the tipi. Slightly to the east of the pole, toward the door, was the fireplace. North and south of this were dug two elongated ponds, filled with water and edged with willows. They were beaver ponds. On the outside of each pond a little effigy mound of earth was made in the form of the beaver facing westward.

Just outside the tipi, to the south of the entrance, was dug a pit two feet deep by six or seven feet long, with the long axis running north and south. At the edge of the northwest corner of the pit (the corner nearest the door of the medicine lodge) was set a vertical pole, ten feet high, from which an eagle feather was hung.

When the ceremony began, the patient was laid at the extreme western edge of the tipi, with two women assistants to the doctor taking their places to the north of him. The doctor worked from the south side of the patient. A group of song leaders filed in to their places at the south side, and a band of drummers sat along the edge of the tipi in the southeast quadrant. Spectator participants filled all the remaining space to the east and north.

In the cure, the fire was lighted after the patient was brought in.

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Cosmogony and Folk Beliefs

Nineteenth-century observers of the Comanches (Dodge, Neighbors, Babb, Burnett, and others) attributed a strong belief in a Supreme Deity to the Comanches, whom they generally addressed as the Great Spirit, but at times as "Our Sure Enough Father."[5] The Great Spirit was a vague, omniscient, all-powerful being, who was credited with creating and governing the earth, sun, moon, and stars. He was the chief god, the creator, the first of all addressed in prayer, and to him the first smoke was offered. The person who prayed looked upward and perhaps held his hands toward the sky. While some maintained that the Comanches believed that the Great Spirit dispensed good and evil, life and death, at his will, others insisted that they believed also in an Evil Spirit who was the antithesis of the Great Spirit. The supposition was that there was eternal conflict between the Great Spirit leading the forces of good and the Evil Spirit controlling the forces of evil. It was argued that the unhappy thought of a father who, though all powerful, permitted ills and sorrows to afflict his children, was forever irreconcilable with Indian philosophy. So strongly did the Comanches feel about the subject of the bad god, says Colonel Dodge, that it was practically tabu as a subject of conversation—a reticence shared by other Plains Indians, but which gave rise to the supposition that the Comanches did not believe in the negative element. The Evil Spirit was not equally powerful with the Great Spirit, however, for he shared with the Great Spirit in control of the earth only. Believing as he did in the immortality of the soul, the Comanche could not conceive of god rivalry in a perfect world. Hence for those who adhered to the philosophy of a dual power, much of the individual outward religious forms revolved around invoking the aid of the Great Spirit and appeasing the wrath and enmity of the Evil Spirit.

Through the medium of a host of inferior evil spirits, the Evil Spirit, it was claimed, brought about every mortification or disaster—droughts, disease, hunger, distress, and discomfort—and was the author of unhappiness, sorrow, and defeat. He made such animals as the panther and venomous serpents, reptiles, and insects for the injury of man.

Although there may be some question as to the source of all the

[5] Babb, *op. cit.*, 44.

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776 bad and evil visited upon man, there was none as to the source of all that was good and beneficial in life. Through the medium of a host of inferior spirits, the Great Spirit brought about all that was good or beneficial to the Comanches, such as health, peace, plenty, and happiness. He aided a worthy warrior in all his undertakings, delivered his enemies into his hands, protected him from danger, privation, and pain, and provided all good and pleasurable things. All good and useful animals were made by him for their use. All their success in hunting was the result of his benevolence. They thought that if they lied to the Great Spirit, or displeased him, he would withdraw his guardianship, allowing them to die or suffer other punishment.

773 The origin of the Comanches was credited to the Great Spirit, according to the early reporters. In one version, another race inhabited the country before them, but a great flood of waters covered the whole earth, and the inhabitants, whom they supposed were white, saved themselves from being destroyed by turning into white birds and flying away. After this the Great Spirit sent down to earth a secondary spirit to create the Comanches. When first made, the Comanches were imperfect. The spirit returned to the Supreme Being and told what he had done. Thereupon, the Great Spirit directed him to return to the earth and complete his work by giving intelligence to the beings he had created and to instruct them how to live. The secondary spirit carried out the instructions. He taught the Comanches how to make the stone arrow points and knives of stone and bone for cutting. He taught them how to put the arrow points on shafts, showed them how to make a bow, and how to use the arrows for shooting. He told them that the buffalo, deer, and the elk—all the animals that are on the earth—were for their use. He taught them to make fire by rubbing two sticks or by knocking together two hard stones until the fire started.[6]

Another account of the creation of the Comanches as told by a long-time adopted Comanche warrior, although differing somewhat in details, likewise credits the work to the Great Spirit. According to this story, the Great Spirit collected the dust from the four corners of the earth to make man, so that when man died the earth would not refuse him a burying place by saying, "Thou hast not been taken from me, hence I cannot receive you in my bosom." When the Great

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Spirit created man, the earth shook and trembled and said unto the Great Spirit, "How can I feed the vast multitudes of man that will issue from the first created?" And the Great Spirit replied, "We will divide the maintenance of man; you will feed man during the daytime with all that you produce, while when the night will come, I will send my sleep upon man, and he will rest, and he will be fed by me with the peace of slumber, and he will awake refreshed in the morning." 773

The Great Spirit took eight parts to form man: the body from the earth, the bones from the stones, the blood from the dew, the eyes from the depth of the clear water, the beauty from his own image, the light of the eyes from the sun, the thoughts from the waterfalls, the breath from the wind, and the strength from the storms. The first man was of such gigantic size that his head reached the skies and his eyes looked from one end of the earth to the other, but menial labor and unwholesome food diminished his size and made him vulnerable.

After the Great Spirit had created man, he ordered all of the inhabitants of the spirit world to go and prostrate themselves before man as recognition that man was the greatest of the Great Spirit's creations. All obeyed the command except one, who as a result of his failure to do so was cast out from the spirit world and made to roam around on earth. To seek revenge, this demon took refuge in the tooth of the serpent, the fang of the spider, the legs of the centipede, and in other poisonous animals, insects, and reptiles to torment and harm man on earth at every opportunity.[7] [825]

Inasmuch as the Shoshones and other tribes of the Great Basin had some conception of an otiose Supreme Being, who in the minds of some was equated with Wolf, the big brother of Coyote, it is not unreasonable to accept the basic validity of these early nineteenth-century descriptions of Comanche beliefs in a Great Spirit. Wolf was wholly beneficent; his acts of original creation made all things perfect and good. Coyote, the mischievous Til Eulenspiegel of Shoshonean folklore, was the spoiler of all things, however. His was the role 773 776

[6] Neighbors, "The Naüni or Comanches of Texas," *loc. cit.*, 127.

[7] Narrated by Herman Lehmann, Comanche captive, who became a respected warrior and member of the tribe. Jonathan H. Jones, *A Condensed History of the Apache and Comanche Indian Tribes*, 199–200.

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773 of the transformer who undid the good works of his big brother.
●776 He brought hardship, travail, and effort into the lives of men. He represented the force of Evil as we conceive it—and yet the Shoshones in no way thought of him in his relationship to Wolf as a conflict of good and evil. Coyote was not bad; he was no more than wantonly mischievous.

When we consider the writings of the early whites among the Comanches on the Great Spirit and the Evil One, we are plagued by serious doubts. We cannot but feel that they, who lived in a time of great religious conviction in this land, projected something of their own ideas of what the Comanches ought to have believed into their descriptive accounts.

At any rate, the old Comanches living in 1933 who served as informants for the Santa Fé Laboratory group revealed only the slightest vestiges of such ideas. The Great Spirit was only occasionally mentioned by them; none showed any concern with the problem of evil. Coyote, in the folk tales recounted by these later-day Comanches, had moved almost entirely from the realm of myth and legend to assume a position of no more than a power-giving animal—except that the old Shoshonean tabu against killing coyotes retained a good deal of its force. The transformer tales, except for the Comanche story of the release of the buffalo, were lost, one and all. What remained of the old Coyote folk tale and myth cycle was only that part which told of Coyote as a harmless bungler and trickster. And the hero in all these tales, as told by Slope, Post Oak Jim, and That's It, was no longer Coyote but Fox, Coon, and Bob Cat. As for the Creation, the typical attitude was expressed by Post Oak Jim: "We never gave much consideration to Creation. We just knew we were here. Our thoughts were mostly directed toward understanding the spirits."

776 The Comanches were not quite certain of the relationship existing
821 between the Great Spirit and the Sun. Sometimes the two were closely associated, while at other times a distinction was made between them. Robert S. Neighbors makes a clear distinction, saying that they offered the first puff of smoke to the Supreme Being, the second to the Sun, the third to the Earth, and so on to the lesser objects of

[8] Neighbors, "The Naüni or Comanches of Texas," *loc. cit.*, 127.
[9] Bollaert, "Observations on the Indian Tribes in Texas," *loc. cit.*, 268.

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veneration in whatever order they might choose.[8] Bollaert states that the Great Spirit was supposed to live in the Sun,[9] but other accounts have it that he lived beyond the Sun. Some Comanches explained that he was so far distant in the sky that they could not hear him speak, and that when they wished to communicate with him, they were obliged to do it through the medium of the Sun, which was nearer and which they could see and converse with. Josiah Gregg thought that the Sun was their principal deity. His conclusion was based partly upon the fact that the Comanches, when preparing for a campaign, ceremoniously placed their arms in the early morning on the east side of their lodges that they "may receive the blessing of the fountain of light at his first appearance."[10]

Apparently the Sun represented the visible medium through which the Great Spirit revealed himself. No doubt the Comanches found it extremely difficult to separate the two, and in their worship of the Sun were paying humble reverence to the Great Spirit at the same time. Their veneration of the Sun cannot be doubted. To this fact practically all those who have commented on Comanche religion have left testimony. It was certainly the most dominant single feature of Comanche belief. The Sun was worshiped as the primary cause of all living things. Contrary to Agent Neighbors' statement, most informants insist that the first puff of smoke was blown toward the Sun. "Smoking to the powers, he first addressed the Sun . . . ," explained That's It, in describing the conditional curse. His religion taught him that the Sun was his father, and he addressed it as such in prayer. "He went above them to the Sun. 'Father,' he swore, 'early in the spring let the first lightning and thunder take my life if this thing be true!' The brothers sat back. They were satisfied. 'If you say such a thing, we can't dispute you.' "[11]

The conditional curse appears to be typical of the reverential attitude toward the Sun; it is called *taβeβekʌs*, "sun-killing." E. Adamson Hoebel has recorded several similar cases where the defendant appealed to the Sun, who knew all and could pass and execute judgment.

The Sun, however, was not the only body worshiped. Next after

[10] Gregg, *op. cit.*, 438.

[11] Hoebel, *The Political Organization and Law-Ways of the Comanche Indians*, 89–90; Smithwick, *op. cit.*, 180.

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the Sun, the Earth was named in prayer. It was worshiped as "Mother" because it was the receptacle and producer of all that sustains life. The Earth was the mother not only of men, but of animals. The mother is the natural protector of the young. The buffalo, by loosening the earth with his horns and pawing or rubbing the loose earth upon his body, and the Comanche, by praying to it and covering himself with paint taken from it, each calls the attention of his mother to her child. It has been said that some Indians would not kill a person while he was digging in the earth—while he was making his medicine, for it might be too strong; but he would distract the attention of his intended victim; then when he looked up, they were on equal terms.

Mother Earth was implored to make everything grow which they ate, that they might live; to make the water flow, that they might drink; to keep the ground firm, that they might walk upon it; to make certain herbs and plants grow, that they might be able to heal the sick; and to cause the grass to grow on which the animals fed. The Great Spirit put the Earth here and put them upon it. Without the Earth nothing could live; there could be no animals or plants. Such reverence for the earth was not unique with the Comanches, but was common among the Indians of the plains. The Earth was addressed in prayer after the Sun and, like the Sun, was regarded as having power to look down on earthlings and pass and execute judgment.

> Smoking to the power, he first addressed the Sun saying, "You, Father, know the truth of the matter. As you look down on them don't let them live till fall." Then to the earth he said, "You, Mother Earth, as you know what is true, don't let them live a happy life on you." Whereupon he gave his pipe to his wife that she might make her self-curse.
>
> She swore to the powers, "Sun, if you don't believe me, then let me perish. Mother Earth, if you don't believe me, let it be true that I won't live right upon you! Whatever he says, let it be true."[12]

Needless to say, not all those who invoked the judgment of the

[12] Hoebel, *The Political Organization and Law-Ways of the Comanche Indians*, 100.

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powers had great faith in the fulfillment of their prayers. In this particular case the woman later admitted that she did not believe in the power of the Sun and had lied. Yet, the many cases remembered by the people where divine judgment had been implored and executed upon the guilty party is evidence that the philosophy was strongly implanted in Comanche society.

The Moon also had the quality of a deity. "She is the Mother—as is the Earth." She was particularly the guardian of the raid. A group of Comanche marauders bent on stealing horses laid a rope on the ground and sat within it. They made smoke to the Moon, praying, "Mother, if it be your will, let this rope take many horses."[13]

Although Sun and Earth and Moon were active in the affairs of men, they were akin to deities and as such were above individualized pity. They gave no personal power and did not come forth as guardian spirits. They were tribal deities who loomed pre-eminent in an individual's consciousness, except when ousted from that position by a special spirit to which a Comanche looked for protection and guidance. Comparison of the latter in strength with the Sun and Earth did not spontaneously arise. It became significant only when and if there was a clash of interest; and then the assurance with which a Comanche relied on his individual patron against the rest of the universe was amazing. Yet there is little suggestion that the visitants were sent by higher authority. They conferred bounties in their own right. The supernaturals might come to loggerheads on behalf of their mortal protégés, or again they might co-operate to aid a favorite. Nothing prevented a man from gaining power from several supernaturals. All were living spirits who spoke the language of man and who possessed the power to assume various forms. The transformation from one being into another could be instantaneous, and the reverse process could occur as suddenly. The guardian spirit was most likely to confer on its ward a blessing or power corresponding to its own natural gifts.

The spirits dwelled in springs, in rivers, on the prairies, in the hills, or in high bluffs. Any phenomenal object of nature was likely to be the residing place of a spirit.

A place was told of, far to the north, where there were always

[13] Informant: Post Oak Jim.

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clouds which the sunlight never penetrated. This was the home of a powerful spirit that brought the winter. He came in a cloud, forcing the Sun back, and as he approached, he spread the cold over the country. Then in the spring the Sun grew higher and higher and told the spirit of the cold to move back, for he must heat the earth and make the grass and all other things so that the Comanches could prosper.

The thunder often appeared as a great bird, somewhat like an eagle, but much larger. The Thunderbird made the thunder and lightning and storm and rain. It was dark blue, or showing the color of cut lead like a thundercloud, with red zigzag markings extending from its heart to the tail and wing tips. It went south at the approach of winter and returned from the warm country with the Sun, bringing the heat and the rain. In its talons the bird carried arrows with which to strike its enemies; therefore, the Indians believed that the eagle on our coins is a Thunderbird. Its shadow was the thunder cloud; it produced lightning by rapidly opening and closing its flashing eyes; thunder was the sound made by the flapping of its enormous wings; and the downpour which followed was from the lake carried on its back.

The Thunderbird supposedly had its dwelling on some high mountain or rocky elevation difficult of access. It discharged arrows, but they could not be seen even when they killed people or animals. Although the Thunderbird myth was common to most Plains Indians, the Comanches have given it variation. They had evidence other than thunder and rain of the existence of the great bird. They told of a spot on the upper Red River where the grass remained permanently burned off over a space having the shape of a huge bird with outspread wings. They claimed that the Thunderbird once alighted there. A hunter shot and wounded a large bird which fell to the ground, but because of its large size, he was afraid to go close enough to kill it. He returned to camp for help. When his party approached the ravine where the bird had fallen, they heard thunder and were blinded by terrific flashes of lightning coming from the ravine. While attempting to approach nearer, one of the hunters was struck dead by a flash. Realizing that their victim was the Thunderbird, the rest became frightened and fled back to camp.[14]

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Cosmogony and Folk Beliefs

The Comanches had great fear of thunder and lightning. It gave them no power and was dangerous in a way that the Sun, Earth, and Moon were not. It was malicious and wantonly prone to tease mankind. "In a thunderstorm you have to remain quiet; you must not say anything to thunder and lightning, as it has no pity."

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They were afraid, but they were Comanches and they did not like to be pushed around. So every now and then one of them got defiant.

« « « I was out riding once when a rainstorm came up. I got off my horse and got down among some weeds and put my head down. The thunder was making noise all around. Finally I decided it was making fun of me—lightning and thunder likes to make fun of someone—so I got on my horse and made a war whoop in defiance. Then I ran away. The lightning struck right near me. I got away, but thunder and lightning has no pity. » » »

This was Post Oak Jim's personal experience. He reverted to the same theme later on. His lesson impressed him greatly, but it was reinforced by what happened to one of his friends.

« « « Thunder and lightning has no pity for them who talk back. We were out in a bunch branding. When we were eating our breakfast, a thunder shower came up. A tough guy, who was with us, went out and shot at the lightning with his gun to show that he was not afraid. The lightning struck and killed him. » » »

A belief of more recent days is not to look in a mirror when it thunders. The lightning may look in, too, and strike you.

Like most prairie tribes, the Comanches greatly revered the buffalo. It has been reported that the dry buffalo head was their idol. Before the entrance of a sweat-lodge there was likely to be a buffalo skull. Out on the prairie might be seen the skulls of buffalo turned so as to face the main camp, the idea being that the guardian spirit would direct the herd to move in the direction the skulls were facing.

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[14] Mooney, "The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890," *loc. cit.*, 968–69.

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Sometimes when they were ceremoniously smoking, after puffs had been blown to the Great Spirit, Sun, and Earth, a puff was blown to a near-by buffalo skull with a prayer that it provide the people with meat to eat and skins for their lodges and clothing. At times they prayed to the buffalo in general to range where hunting would be good.

Sometimes buffalo talked to a person. Although in Cheyenne mythology it was only the buffalo male that talked, in Comanche mythology it could be either male or female, old or young. A buffalo might turn into a human being and through its supernatural power reveal the location of the herd to the people or otherwise perform good deeds. A Comanche story which has survived not only is interesting but explains how the guardian spirits functioned through the medium of the buffalo.

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" " " Once when a party of Comanches went on a buffalo hunt, they were accompanied by a young boy. He was a handsome child, and his family, who were well-to-do, dressed him in the finest regalia and provided him with the best of equipment and a swift horse. When the hunters charged and scattered the herd, the boy selected and followed a small group which contained a beautiful young calf. The boy selected this buffalo for his kill. His first arrow hit beneath the lowest rib. He shot again, and again his arrow found its mark, but the buffalo did not fall. The boy decided to retrieve his arrows, but the buffalo ran into a stream and stopped in the middle of it. The boy would not go into the water because he did not wish to spoil his fine clothes, so he abandoned the chase.

Ordinarily a buffalo shot as this one had been would die, but through its supernatural power the young buffalo maintained life, as it had fallen in love with the boy. It rejoined the herd and in time gave birth to a calf. The boy by means of the two arrows was father of the calf. The other members of the herd would not play or associate with the calf. The calf noticed that the other calves stood around their mothers and fathers, and he wondered about his father. When he asked his mother about his father, she explained to him that his father was "one of those who eats us, and it was I who desired that he be your father." The calf then insisted on seeing him, even after

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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his mother warned that they would be killed should they upon the long journey meet scouts from his father's people. They traveled by night, and after many days came in sight of the village. The mother told the calf to do as she did. She rolled herself about on the ground, and there stood a woman dressed in a buffalo-robe with peg holes or eyelets about the edges. The calf rolled on the ground and became a handsome boy, wrapped in a beautiful yellow calf robe. Then the woman told the boy to go forward to the center of the village; there he would find his father and his relatives in his tent. The boy found everything just as his mother had said, and told his father his story. His father remembered the incident, and asked for the boy's mother. They went for her, and the father said that both were to live in his house. The woman returned the two arrows to the father and cautioned him not to drink from any stream except as she directed.

The people in the village were starving. As soon as the buffalo woman learned of this, she took a piece of dry meat and fat and gave it to the man. Although the portion was small, he satisfied his appetite without consuming it all, and passed the remainder to another. When they had all eaten their fill, a portion of the dry meat still remained. When the father again spoke to the buffalo woman about the plight of the tribe, she directed every family to pack a parfleche as if it were full of dry meat. When morning came the parfleches were full of dry meat. After they had again eaten, she directed them to break camp and follow her. She led them to a herd of buffalo, and they made a rich killing. They were aware that the strange woman was the cause of their success; also they noticed that neither she nor the calf boy ever ate.

Some time had passed, and the Comanches were prosperous. One day the father of the buffalo calf, while traveling across the prairies, became very thirsty. He remembered the warning given him by the woman, but thought he would merely wet his mouth. As he did so, there occurred a great confusion in the camp, and the people saw the woman and the boy, who had been instantly transformed into a buffalo cow and calf, fleeing from the camp. The father was very sad, for the woman had made him very prosperous through her supernatural power. Likewise, the people were sad, for they had learned to love the buffalo woman and the calf-boy."[15] » » »

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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The Comanches

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The coyote was regarded by the Comanches as a brother, who often warned those who possessed power to speak and understand its language, of impending trouble. "Coyote medicine was for knowing things ahead or in the future."

When Skinny and Wrinkled was staying with an old man north of Medicine Park, Oklahoma, the old fellow asked him one night, "Well, have you heard from our friend yet?" Skinny and Wrinkled had heard nothing. The old man admonished him, "Well, you better listen hard now. I believe he is coming around pretty soon."

Not long after, they were talking one night when the dogs began to bark. The old man told Skinny and Wrinkled to shut them up. "I believe there's our friend."

Sure enough, there was a coyote howling.

"I could not interpret what he was saying, but the old man could."

"You better start saving up your bread," was his version of the message. "He says there is going to be a hard winter this year. We aren't going to have much to eat."

That is the way it was, according to Skinny and Wrinkled. The winter before, the Comanches had more flour than they knew what to do with. That winter there were hardly enough rations to give them what was due them.

The coyote also predicted good fortune. One night a coyote howled, and at breakfast the mother of Skinny and Wrinkled said it was telling the tribe that they were all going to get a lot of money soon. Her husband, who was quite a skeptic, laughed and said, "How do you know?"

She insisted, however, and warned, "You wait and see. If the old man talks again before the week is out, it sure is coming true."

On Friday they heard him again. The very next day there were checks for $180 each at the agency for every member of the tribe.[16]

If, when the Indians were on a journey, a coyote jumped up before them, looked at them, and barked or howled, they would likely change their course and travel no farther in that direction that day. A friendly spirit in the form of a wolf was warning them of danger,

[15] Gene Weltfish, "The Man Who Married a Buffalo Wife, A Comanche Story," *Caddoan Texts* (*Publications* of the American Ethnological Society, XVII), 218–23.

[16] Informant: Yellowfish.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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and they must heed the warning. The enemy was generally found just where the coyote told them.

Eagles possessed power in matters concerning war. Because of this power their feathers were attached to shields, worn tied in the hair, and during the later period they were placed on the war bonnet. Owing to the protective power of the bird, those wearing the feathers believed that they would not be hit by either bullets or arrows.[17] When eagle feathers were attached to the shield, it could not be pierced by either bullets or arrows. The Comanches secured a part of their feathers by taking young eagles from their nests and keeping them in captivity. (Young eagles were easily kept by tethering them by the legs to a pin driven in the ground.) After the eagles had reached full size, they pulled out the tail feathers. War whistles were made from wing bones of eagles.

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The deer had much power which might be used for good or evil. It had the power to cause or cure disease. It could say to its favorite: "Of all things on this earth that step on the ground, there is nothing that beats me in running. By that save yourself in time of trouble." At times it was a helper in love affairs. Possibly because the elk had great vitality and was hard to kill, it was credited with having great strength which could be transmitted to those whose guardian spirit it happened to be. The bear possessed power to cure wounds. The skunk possessed great power. Doctors used its hide to hold their medicine. Men tied its tail to their horses' tails in war. For a member of a war party to kill and skin a skunk while on the way to attack was likely to nullify some of the most powerful war medicine.[18] The roadrunner had the power to reinvigorate and give speed, since it was a speedy bird. The owl was unpopular, for it brought bad news, but the Comanches never shrank nearly so much with fear and horror at the sound of its hoot as did the Kiowas. The wolf gave power to walk barefoot on the cold snow. Medicine men who had this power painted the flesh between their toes red like that of the wolf. And if a person would howl like a wolf before eating red haws, there was no danger of foundering on them.

In like manner, in an ever lessening degree, practically all animals

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] This was the reason attributed by the leader for the failure at Adobe Walls.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

and insects were attributed certain powers by someone. One of the very few animals known to the Comanches which never gave supernatural power was the horse. Although of extreme economic value, horses had no place in the ceremonial life of the tribe; nor did they ever appear in visions or significant dreams except as incidental details. This was also true of the dog. It would seem that the dog and horse, as everyday parts of the Comanche household, were too profane to be thought of as power givers. Man had control of them. Givers of power had to be outside his realm of dominance.

Just as animals, birds, and insects might be guardian spirits, so was any unusual phenomenon of nature likely to be the abiding place of a spirit. Some of these places, because of the extraordinary power of the spirit abiding within, became rather famous among the Comanches. One such place is Medicine Mounds.

Medicine Mounds are a line of rounded hills in Hardman County, Texas, between the Pease and the Red rivers. They are rather conspicuous, the cones rising about 350 feet above the surrounding plain. Flanking them to the west is a gully-washed scar of an ancient buffalo trail. On the top of the highest of the four mounds is a flat cap rock, a protector against erosion. It was believed by the Comanches to be the dwelling place of a powerful and benevolent spirit.

A Comanche medicine man first discovered its great power when once his band came to hunt in the vicinity of the mounds. He had a young and beautiful daughter who was ill of fever and was growing weaker day by day. Her father had sucked worms and evil spirits out of many a brave and many a squaw, had chanted away the pains of many a girl, and had smoked the weakness from many a boy, but he could not cure his own daughter. He had rattled his gourd all night long while he prayed and chanted. From his medicine bundle he had prepared cures, while the moon was dark and while it was full. He had mixed and tried his formulae in every way he knew. He had consulted other medicine men. But all without results. One morning he came out of his tipi and in despair was gazing silently into the distance when suddenly his eyes came to rest on the rock-capped peak of the highest mound. Here was a powerful spirit that could help him, he thought. So without touching water or food, he went apart to pray and fast until the spirit should send him a revelation. At length

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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it came. He was instructed to take his medicines to the high rock and there mix them so that the power of the good spirit should enter into them. He prepared the medicine as directed by the vision, gave it to his daughter, and then again went out and prayed to the mound spirit—prayed with the patience of those who live under the sun, and watch shadows, and note day by day the greening and the browning of the grass. At length he heard the voice of his daughter. He bounded into the tipi. Her eye was bright, her color almost healthy. She had slept deeply, she said. From that hour she mended steadily and soon was able to return to her work.

Thereafter this medicine man made regular visits to the mound, made offerings to the mound spirit, and performed his cures through its aid. The fame of the mound spirit spread. Other medicine men came. From the gypsum waters of a spring at the base of the mounds, the ailing Comanches came to drink. The spirit came to be a protector for the Comanche bands. Here it could view the country for miles around, and from this lofty point directed arrows of hunters to the vitals of buffalo and deflected those of enemies shot at his wards, the Comanches. And today the name of the four extraordinary hills lined against the ancient buffalo trail that runs down to Pease River remains as a testimonial of the associations they had for the native people who lived by and vanished with the buffalo—Medicine Mounds.[19]

Medicine Bluff is another place commemorated in name and held in great reverence by the Comanches as being the abode of a powerful, benevolent spirit. It is located in Comanchería at the confluence of Cache and Medicine Bluff creeks. The two creeks empty into Red River and are overlooked by a precipitous bluff—Medicine Bluff. It is a mile in length, forming a perfect crescent, rising at once from the bed of Medicine Bluff creek, which flows at the base of the perpendicular scarp, to the height of 310 feet. The surface of the face of the bluff is perfectly regular and smooth. Moss covers the sides with a garb of pale green. The greater portion of the face is perfectly bare, though at some places a few stunted cedars have found lodgment in the crevices. From the rear the bluff presents three knolls, the center one being the highest. Mount Scott, about eight miles dis-

[19] J. Frank Dobie, "Stories in Texas Place Names," *Straight Texas*, 32–34.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4. 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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tant, stands forth with its pyramidal outline like a sentinel guarding the eastern gate of the Wichita Mountains.

There, from the bluff, according to a Comanche legend recounted by Thomas Battey, a powerful spirit looked over and cared for his people, saw that game was abundant and that his children were prosperous and happy. Comanche medicine men erected a cairn about six feet in height upon the summit of the principal knoll. Here the sick repaired or were brought by their relatives or friends, and here they were left to its invisible and subtle power. Especially those who were past the cure of the medicine men were deposited on the altar and left to be disposed of by the spirit. If the sick had not offended the supernatural powers, they were suddenly healed and returned to their kindred. Sometimes they were transported bodily to the after world. But if they were notoriously bad, they were allowed to die, and the ravens descended from the air, and the wolf came up from the valley and devoured the body, and the bones were gathered up by the Evil Spirit and deposited in the land of terrors.[20] At times the vicinity of the bluff became suddenly lighted up as by a great fire. The dews of night, the rain, and the wind circled about the spot of the altar at the very summit, but none of these agencies of nature trespassed, and the patient was thus left sheltered better than in his own tipi.

To the spirit was attributed the power of resurrection. Once an old warrior, who had long lived among the women of the village, having ceased to hunt or go on the warpath and having been turned out to wait his time to join his fathers, had struggled to the top of the bluff to die and be borne away to the after world. Each night after his departure, when darkness covered the face of nature, the awe-stricken people of the village below observed a great blaze, as if a fire had been built to alarm them. On the morning after the third night, a young man equipped as a warrior was seen descending the bluff, along the trail to the village. He approached the chief's lodge and sat by the fire. The warriors gathered around, but no one recognized him and so remained silent, waiting for him to speak. Lighting his pipe, decorated with beads and feathers of strange birds, the stranger, after all had made the ceremonial smoke, began his story.

When he had reached the top of the hill, he could see the village

[20] We read this to be un-Comanche-like embroidery supplied by Battey.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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and hear the laughter of children, the mourning of his kindred, and the barking of the dogs. He could see the buffalo and deer in the distance, and the young warriors in all their pride and strength. Then he asked himself, "Why do I live any longer? My fires have gone out. I must follow my fathers. The world is beautiful to the young, but to the old it has no pleasures. Far away to the setting suns are the hunting grounds of my people. I will go there." After these words, he had mustered all he could of his failing strength and leaped into the air from the giddy height before him. He knew no more of the woes of life. He was caught up in midair and transported into a smiling country where there was no rain and no wind, where the great chiefs of all the Comanches were assembled. They were all young and chased the buffalo and feasted. There was no darkness. The Great Spirit was everywhere and everybody was happy.

The story captivated the minds and imagination of the listeners, and the strange young warrior became at once an oracle and a big medicine man in the tribe. His counsel was all-powerful, and his abilities to cure were considered infallible. Reverence for the bluff was enhanced; and in the years that followed no Comanche would ascend to the summit of the hill except for a most sacred purpose. When white soldiers fired shots at the cliff to hear the echoes, the Comanche guide, Blue Leggings, was horror stricken, and he refused to scale the peak with the soldiers, saying, "Me no sick!"[21]

At times a young man, eager to take the warpath for the first time, ascended to the sacred spot in quest of his vision. Having provided himself with a shield, in accordance with ceremonial instructions the youth proceeded to the highest point of the bluff, remaining for three successive days. A part of the ceremony included presenting the face of the shield to the rising sun each morning, as if warding off an arrow or a spear. The sacred surroundings of the place and the Sun, the emblem of the Great Spirit, casting its rays upon the shield were supposed to endow it with supernatural protective powers.

On principle no Comanche worshiped the entire animal life or physical phenomena of his country. But accounts of recent and legendary visions prove that no wild species or type can be ruled out as a possible source of power. The world view precluded nothing from

[21] Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, 98.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

1776 the range of the mystically potent, but the individual consciousness ascribed power to a relatively narrow selections of beings, their identity being determined by chance experience.

To discuss Comanche religion in terms of a definite pantheon would therefore be preposterous. Comanche "gods" were not clear-cut beings with sharply defined cosmic or social functions. Divine power was not concentrated in a few major personalities, but diffused over the universe and likely to crop up in unexpected places. A Comanche did not first envisage a god and then worship him; he started with the thrill, with the sense of a supernatural agency, and objectified his emotional stirrings. There were, nevertheless, certain supernaturals that appeared rather frequently both in ritual and in visionary experiences, notably the eagle, the bear, and the buffalo.

1771 Religion and ethics were largely divorced. The really vital social canons had no supernatural sanctions. When a vision-seeker called upon the supernaturals to favor him, he hardly ever stressed his moral worth, but his desire for aid. What he pleaded for was not moral elevation, but some material benefit; and it was compassion that animated his patron in granting it. Often, to be sure, the visitant laid down rules of conduct, but they had no bearing on social considerations. Good intentions were no safeguard against the consequences of transgression. A man who unwittingly broke rules imposed upon him had to bear the brunt of the catastrophe, for ignorance of the "law" was no safeguard against punishment.

5: Carlson & Jones E, N-4, 5 (1933)1939
NO6 Comanche NO6

824 278 757 to the informant) and boiled, the brew being used both externally and internally. The stems of a sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*) were soaked in water, and the body was bathed with this liquid. As a cure for colds the bark of the sumac (*Rhus trilobata*) was chewed and the juice swallowed.

A few miscellaneous remedies remain to be described.[4] The leaves of snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*) were mixed with some other substance (unknown to the informant) as a remedy for whooping cough, and the roots of the nightshade (*Solanum sp.*) were boiled and the decoction prescribed as a general tonic, particularly in cases of tuberculosis. An infusion for reducing swellings was made from the red false mallow (*Malvastrum coccineum*) steeped in water. The tribes of the Missouri River region employed this plant in a similar manner (7, p. 103). Their practice was to chew the roots and apply [752] them to inflamed sores and wounds as a cooling and healing salve. The mucilaginous properties of the plant probably account for its use in this way. The roots of the dotted button snakeroot (*Liatris punctata*) were chewed and the juice swallowed as a cure for swollen testes. The leaves of the pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) or of the walnut (*Juglans nigra*), ground and rubbed on the affected part, were thought efficacious for ringworm.

824 411 439 The Comanche used the branches of the Osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*) in the manufacture of bows. This was the preferred wood for the making of bows throughout most of the Plains region. Since the Osage orange occurs in only a limited area, from southern Missouri to northern Texas, its wood became a valuable trade article. There are accounts telling of the great demand for it among tribes as far north as the Arikara and the Blackfoot and as far west as the Pueblos. John D. Hunter, who spent many years as a captive among the Indians of the Arkansas and Missouri country, says of the Osage orange (11, p. 173):

[825 752] [4] Two nonvegetal Comanche medicines were also collected. Although these are not pertinent to a discussion of plant uses, they may be recorded briefly. One is the nest of some nondomestic bee (Comanche: *tipinatsu*), composed of a gummy substance which gives off a pungent odor when heated. The nest was placed on the fire; its fumes, inhaled by one who was unconscious, were said to revive the person quickly. The other medicine is a white chalky mineral, apparently fossil bones (Comanche: *tsoβit'sitsuni*), which was obtained from deposits and used in treating sprains and fractures. The Comanche considered [776] this mineral to be the bones of Piamupits, a supernatural being.

7: Richardson D-4 (no date) 1929
NO6 Comanche NO6

411 steel, about two feet and a half long and an inch wide, tapering to a point, fixed into a slender handle of bois d'arc, the whole weapon being about seven feet in length.

714 411 The Comanche shields were described as being circular in form, about two feet in diameter, and made of wicker work covered with two thicknesses of Buffalo hide. Between the coverings of buffalo hide was a padding of hair about an inch thick. With the advent of the rifle the Indians probably reinforced their shields. At any rate the tough buffalo hide covering, turned flesh side out and polished as much as possible, would turn a rifle ball unless it struck it perpendicular to the surface.

411 Long after they had become acquainted with metal implements the Comanches continued to use a war club made by binding a withe around a hard stone of about two pounds in weight. A groove around the stone helped to keep it in place. The handle was about fourteen inches long. No doubt the Indians often put this stone to various uses such as driving stakes.

771 776 Very little is known about the religion of the wild Comanches. Their religious conceptions were evidently vague and they had comparatively few well established customs of religious meaning. One observer credits them with acknowledging a supreme ruler and director, whom they called the great spirit, and with worshipping the sun as the great cause of life and the earth as the receptacle and producer of all that sustains life.[23] It may well be doubted that they had any conception of a single "Great Spirit," but their veneration for the sun and earth can not be doubted. When game was brought down on a hunt the carcass was immediately prepared and cooked, but no matter how hungry the Indian might be, not a [782] bite was eaten until the chief or leader had cut off a morsel and buried it. Similarly when the chief lit his pipe the first puff of smoke was blown toward the sun and the second to the earth.[24]

784 Naturally these savages had many taboos. One or two of these may be mentioned as illustrative, for they were sometimes matters of great consequence. In 1787, the Spanish in New Mexico tried a colonization experiment with the Comanches and spent a consider-

23. Parker, Notes Taken with Marcy, 231.
24. See Noah Smithwick, The Evolution of a State, 180. Ceremonies preceding the meal similar to this were common among the plains tribes. See Hodge, I, 455.

10:Horn T-3 (1836-1837) 1955
NO6 Comanche NO6

them to, with a kind of stoic indifference. But they 181
are not slow to profit by the labor of others beside themselves, whenever an opportunity offers; and it is truly astonishing to witness the pains and labor they will go through to obtain one; and when they have marked their victim, it would seem that nothing short of an interposing miracle of mercy could save him. They literally live by slaying and murdering all of man and beast that come in their way. There are [55] exceptions in the case of the traders [439] who go among them, and who have learned to anticipate their wants, and to supply them; but woe to the unwary trader that offends them! He seldom, if ever, fails to pay the forfeit with his life. They are trained, from infancy to age, to deeds of cruelty and bloodshed, and are as wholly wreckless of human rights, out of their own circle, as though they held in their own hands the destinies of the universe; and they appear to be alike insensible of obligation to any being in heaven or on 771
earth. I could not, from all the observation of which I was capable, discover that they had any [776] idea of a Supreme Being; nor could I learn that they paid their devotion to any kind of being, unless something of the kind might be obscurely inferred from the following circumstance: In a [789] storm, with thunder and lightning, I have frequently seen them go out and throw dirt into the air, and utter unintelligible sounds; but whether it was designed to express their resentment to, or

553 tutionalized joking relationship, such nick-
551 names were usually given by an in-law,
602 and more frequently than not were derogatory or had some sexual or obscene reference.

553 A young man would often receive a new name after he had proven himself on his first war party. Or, a young warrior, who aspired to the name of an old man who had been a famous warrior, could ask permission of the oldster to become his namesake. The old man might then put the youth to the test of equalling a feat well remembered by the people. If the youth met the test, the old man would be compelled to give up his illustrious name and use a former one.

533 In earlier times names along with other
787 gifts were bestowed through visitations by
776 supernatural spirits who were sought out
[178] by fasting and dreaming in secluded places. This practice, however, seems to have been in eclipse as early as 1870, although many older Comanche still bear names given them
551 by their guardian spirits. Thus, Comanche
181 names may be characterized as varied and highly individual, a fact which reflects Comanche emphasis on the worth and variety of the individual personality.

551 6.2. By a study of the 2394 Comanche
177 names on the January 1940 census rolls
[161] one may trace, from the older through the younger generations, the adoption of the White system of patronymics and the consequent displacement of the native naming patterns described above. This shift was accomplished largely within the past seventy-odd years dating from the early reservation period. Rollcalls, the taking of vital statistics and census data, intermarriage with Whites, rationing, attendance at schools and churches, orthodox baptisms, trading, and the casual bestowal of personal names by the Whites were all factors instrumental in the change.

551 Although the rolls were called every three
177 days, the men by name and the women and
657 children by count, as early as 1875, the first formal census was taken in 1890 and names of Indians "had to be definitely decided

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

auxiliary to an otherwise impotent authority. The pains and penalties of their criminal laws, are confined almost exclusively to the weaker sex. The incontinence of a wife, is punished by cutting off her nose. This odious abscission is made from the junction of the cartilage and bond, obliquely down to the lip. Several instances of this shocking penal infliction are now extant. But the sentence of mutilation is sometimes remitted in consequence of the interposition of male connections. The decisions of the law always yield to a determined resistance.

If one man wantonly kills another, the nearest friend of the deceased, is permitted, and indeed it devolves upon him as a duty, to revenge his death, by taking the life of the murderer. But the price of blood, may be commuted for articles of more value and convenience than blood, and murder may be atoned for, and the spirit of revenge appeased by liberal donations to the living relatives of the deceased. Such atrocities however seldom occur. Notwithstanding the extreme laxity of their whole economy of government, and their entire exemption from legal restraint, they live together with a degree of harmony that would do credit to the most refined and best organized societies. The little bickerings and jealousies and inordinate strivings for thrift and distinction, that disquiet and mar the social circles of refinement, are unknown to the rude and simple children of nature.

The Comanchee system of religion is about as perfect and luminous as that of their jurisprudence. They believe in a Supreme Being, and in a future state of existence, but have adopted no mode or manner of worship. Indeed they consider the Supreme Being, to be so far removed from them as not to wish to interfere directly, in their temporal concerns, and as equally unwilling to be interfered with. They therefore leave him to enjoy his repose without molestation, and expect the same indulgence for themselves. They have no idea of a special superintending Providence, or that the Great Spirit takes any particular cognizance of the actions of men. And they consequently defer all their devotional concerns, if indeed they entertain any, to a dark futurity,

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

175 771 which has never been shadowed to their minds, except by the faint and flickering light of nature. The beams of divine revelation have never penetrated the dismal mists that constitute their moral atmosphere. They nevertheless believe in a final accountability, in which they plainly, but perhaps unconsciously, indicate a sentiment of the omniscience and ubiquity of the Great Judge of Heaven and Earth. By an obvious and natural impulse of unenlightened reason, which is most apt to prefigure the joys and sorrows of a future state, by the experience of the past and present, they suppose that when a good man dies, he goes to a fertile and salubrious country where the Buffaloes, which furnish their principal and favorite aliment, and every desirable species of game are abundant, and where they will enjoy the charms of the chase, with a more exquisite zest, without interruption and without satiety. The reverse of this destiny is assigned to the wicked, who they imagine will be driven away, to linger out a miserable existence, among rugged and sterile hills that are infested with all manner of noxious animals, and where the Buffaloes, Deer and Bears are scarce, and meagre and unsavory to the palate. Goodness, however, in their system of ethics, is a qualified term that has reference to acts of public benefit and renown, such as taking of scalps, expert and successful hunting, and dexterity in stealing from their enemies, rather than to the gentler virtues, that adorn and humanize and purify the heart.

175 771 776 [186] 175 771 [82] [753] [793] [796] They believe in polytheism and in both good and evil spirits of either sex, but claim supremacy to the one Great Being, whom they represent as a Big Man, that can never die, and who is the peculiar original parent of the Comanchee race. The origin of other nations they assign to other subordinate Deities, and as their father is the Greatest God in Heaven, so they think themselves the greatest nation on earth. They attribute an inferior modicum of divinity to the sun, and suppose all febrile diseases to emanate from the displeasure of that magnificent candle of nature. They have no order of priesthood, but are not altogether exempt from the juggles of priestcraft. They have no symbols of true faith, neither do they know any distinction of days or seasons.

22: Dacus Q-3 (no date) 1960 NO6 Comanche NO6
(ca. 1870)

[ca. 1870]

he was carried into the white man's country and that they gave him to a great monster, with wings, that lived upon the mighty waters at the place where the sun rises, and it had flown away with him. This was a long time ago. 'Our people think white men bad medicine.'"

The Comanches believe in a Supreme Being, and in many minor deities —that is, in the manifestation of a supernatural power in the operations of nature. Their religious ideas, if such a term may be allowed, are of the vaguest character. They bury their dead, with great secrecy, and place in their graves weapons and food. They believe in the immortality of man, and picture a fair paradise beyond the boundary of time. They have few ceremonies of a religious character. For the dead, they offer prayers at the rise of the sun. With their faces turned toward the rising orb of day, over the graves of their departed friends, they set up a howl sufficient to strike terror to the heart of one unaccustomed to hear them. They are not a happy people. Like all aborigines, they are grave, taciturn and moody.

539 [829] 771 [776] 764 775 796 765 181

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Lyon's Kathairon

For Preserving and Beautifying the Human Hair, to Prevent Its Falling Out and Turning Gray.

A well preserved Head of Hair, in a person of middle age, at once bespeaks refinement, elegance, health and beauty. It may truly be called Woman's Crowning Glory, while men are Not insensible to its advantages and charms. Few things are more disgusting than thin, frizzly, harsh, untamed Hair, with head and coat covered with dandruff. Visit a barber and you feel and look like a new man. This is what LYON'S KATHAIRON will do all the time. The charm which lies in well placed Hair, Glossy Curls, Luxuriant Tresses, and a Clean Head, is noticeable and irresistible.

Missouri Republican, *November 8, 1872*

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

Out of apparent weakness emerged the wildest marauding brigandage. The Comanches whipped and drove the Apaches from the southern Plains. They stalemated the Spanish. They decimated the pueblo of Pecos. They ranged far below the Rio Grande on slave- and booty-taking raids into Old Mexico. They blocked the westward expansion of the Texas frontier for several decades. They became "The Spartans of the Prairies." They were rough, tough, aggressive and militant individualists. They gave trouble to all their enemies and to themselves. And in their way, out of the nothingness of Shoshone legal backgrounds they shaped a crude but effective system of law to cope with the clashes of individual with individual within their ranks.

. . .

The basic postulates of the Comanche way of life are simple and few. They express a strong individualism and man-to-man aggressiveness in the following terms:

Postulate I. The individual is supreme in all things.

Postulate II. The self of the male is realized in striving for accumulated war honors, horses, and women.

Postulate III. Women are sexually and economically desirable but are inferior and subordinate to men.

Corollary 1. The sex rights of a husband to his wife are limited to himself and his brothers.

Postulate IV. The strongest social tie is that of brother to brother.

Postulate V. Sexual relations between kin (incest) constitutes subhuman behavior.

Postulate VI. War is essential to the prosperity of the tribe and the individual self-expression of the male.

Postulate VII. The great spirits (Sun and Earth) have powers of "legal" judgment.

Postulate VIII. Each Comanche ought to cooperate with others and help them in their life's activities.

Corollary 1. Altruism and sharing of goods is socially desirable.

Corollary 2. The killing of a fellow tribesman is not permissible.

Postulate IX. Horses, especially favorite horses, have quasi-human personalities.

The simple needs of Comanche society did not impose any great social pressure for governmental controls, and the high value placed upon individual freedom of action also worked to hold government at a minimum. If a Comanche had been invited to subscribe to a political slogan, he would have given his assent to the proposition that "that government is best which governs least." So fully was this precept expressed in a lack of political action that That's It, one of the most acute of our Comanche informants,

682 It was an absolute privilege-right, which not even her family would move [593] to challenge.

On the other hand, for one Comanche male to kill another was never 682 a privilege-right, even when applying force to an over-stubborn defendant. 627 Any willful killing required a revenge killing of the slayer. Here was the fatal weakness of Comanche law, as indeed of so much primitive law. The culture provided right ways of procedure and defined the substance of 602 tortious acts. But the primacy of the kin group came to the fore whenever 682 a prosecutor felt he had pushed negotiation as far as it would carry and then had taken recourse to arms. The kin of the defendant whom he had 627 killed did not accept the killing, although general public opinion may have held that the victim had it coming to him. The Comanche kinsmen took revenge on the prosecutor regardless of the rightness of his original grievance. In enforcing the law he lost his life, a victim of *lex talionis.*

However much Comanche law fell short in this respect, custom [598] remedied the defect in another. Blood-revenge killing was only of the first killer and retaliation did not lead to feud. The kinship principle, while extant, was nevertheless weak among the Comanches, and general fighting within the tribe was not to be countenanced when there were always outside enemies to be confronted. The killer, and the killer alone, had to die. There it stopped. No religious sanction, no tribal authority, was necessary to suppress the feuding tendency. Custom was sufficient restraint, and in this the Comanches were fortunate, for thereby they escaped the self-renewing curse that plagues so many primitive law systems.

Willful killing of a man's favorite horse was an act akin to murder, 685 especially if the horse had been bequeathed to him by a best friend. Re- 627 taliation was taken not in killing the favorite horse of the transgressor but [825] in slaying the transgressor himself. A favorite horse had a legal personality and was equated with a human being. Consequently, no further blood revenge followed, for things were already equal: a man for a horse.

789 Every Comanche male at one time or another went on a vision quest in search of power. He did not abase himself before the supernatural spirits or masochistically mutilate and torture himself to arouse their compassion. 716 Nor did he weep before them to arouse their pity. Unlike the tribesmen 789 of the Plains to the north, he assumed that the spirits were generally benign toward him; they needed no coaxing to share the benefits of their power with him. If he fasted and waited in a lonely place, they would help him. 716 Nor did they interfere in his daily living except as they put conditions on the use of the power they gave him. A Comanche had to observe no super- 784 natural tabus save those that went with his own personal medicine. Under Postulate VIII[A] most Comanche medicine men used their powers to help 756 the people. They cured and used their medicine to bring success in war 789 and the hunt. They even, for a contractual consideration, helped others

A [See category 181, p. 69--Analyst]

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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175 178 624 man, if he was fortunate, could become a peace chief, but a peace chief possessed no real authority and functioned most importantly as a mediator in the disputes which arose among the younger men.

175 178 324 With the greater food supply offered by the seemingly boundless bison herds, hunting magic decreased in importance. Antelope magic did persist from the Shoshone heritage. The more favorable living conditions and constant food supply also allowed the individual bands, which had retained their Basin characteristics, to become larger and to achieve a greater degree of independence from their sister bands. The emphasis on the buffalo as a food source also tended to decrease the importance of gathering and exploitation of the floral environment for food. Further, the Comanches made little or no use of fish and of such small game as rabbits (Lowie 1954:6).

175 178 847 727 562 593 304 The Basin Shoshone practice of infanticide disappeared as the family group could more efficiently care for its offspring. The practice of enculturating slaves and captives became common among the Comanches in order to augment their numbers and specifically to free males for hunting and warfare. The stress on war and hunting also tended to debase the position of women, and such practices as the mutilation of wives, a custom which had never occurred in Basin Shoshone culture, came into practice.

175 178 77 774 775 775 578 721 796 Patterns of religious belief and behavior also underwent certain changes from Basin life to the Plains. A vaguely defined belief in a Great Spirit persisted, as did the relative lack of concern with the afterlife. However, the intense fear of ghosts held by the Basin Shoshone diminished in the Comanche Plains culture. Also, the practice of power transmission from individual to individual, instead of power source to individual, developed in importance. The decrease in ghost fear and, it is assumed, witchcraft in Comanche culture, as opposed to the Basin culture, was greatly facilitated by the lessening of intrasocial tensions and the Comanches' ability, through warfare, to turn aggressions outward and away from the primary group. As a whole, Comanche religious patterns were exceedingly simple and lacking in elaborate ceremonialism and ritual, at least compared to their Plains neighbors (Hoebel 1940:83).

175 171 621 575 796 291 342 The Comanches possessed characteristics, other than their paucity of ceremonialism, which served to differentiate them from other Plains tribes. The Comanche bands were more self-managing than bands found among other Plains groups. Warrior societies, a diagnostic trait of Plains culture, were lacking in Comanche society except in the most rudimentary form. The Sun Dance was not a vital aspect of Comanche culture. Decoration of clothing with beads, quills, and ornaments of bone, shell, and metal was deemphasized, while heavy fringing of the garments was the rule. The Comanche tepee was built on a four-pole base like that of the Blackfoot, Sarsi, Ute, and Shoshone; while the Comanches' historic neighbors, such as the Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa-Apache used a three-pole foundation (Lowie 1954:33).

72 224 By the early nineteenth century the bison herds were greatly diminished on the south Plains, and the Comanches increasingly turned to raiding to augment their economy. During this period the Comanches raided New Mexico, the Santa Fe Trail, northern Texas, and Old Mexico, sometimes as far south as Durango.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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and in her most difficult doctoring situations and in all her most critical moments, it is to the spirits of her teachers that she turns for aid. 115 159 756 787 755

The Supernatural Universe

Sanapia's description of the supernatural universe is full of contradictory elements. This is not as great an obstacle to action as it may seem since she addresses each element individually as the situation demands. She has no need to attempt to grasp the entirety of this universe at once. Sanapia is able to select from her potpourri of supernaturalistic notions the ones which best suit a particular occasion. 115 159 756 775

She believes that living human beings share the earth with the ghosts, or malevolent spirits of deceased humans who, alive, led evil lives. The ghosts can enter into the world of men, but men cannot enter the world of ghosts except through death. Also, somewhere, neither in the plane of living man nor in the plane of ghost existence, is the realm of pure, unembodied supernatural power. Such entities as the sun, the earth, and the eagle are able to tap this power and thus possess it to a greater extent than can mortal men. Power can be acquired by men only through secondhand channels and never from its source. A mortal would be killed if exposed to pure power. The power, from its original source, is inexhaustible. 115 159 756 778

In yet another plane of existence are found the spirits of good men such as the disciples of Jesus and the spirits of Sanapia's mother and uncle. This realm is not quite like heaven, which is the abode of God and Jesus and the eternal home of those ordinary souls who have nothing to offer the world of the living, as do the spirits of Medicine men or the disciples of Jesus. Hell is somewhere deep in the earth. Sanapia believes that it is the special eternal home of evil white men. Her notions of the nature of hell follow the standard Christian concept. 115 159 756 775 [776] [772] [777]

Peyote is similar to the sun or the eagle in its ability to embody an extraordinary degree of supernatural power. However, unlike the sun or the eagle, peyote comes from the Christian God as a sign of his love for all Indian people. According to Sanapia, the sun has existed longer then the Christian God, and is therefore entirely self-sufficient. 115 159 756 755 778 776

Thus Sanapia can become more or less Christian, peyotist, or Plains shaman as varying situations present themselves. By not assigning a negative value to contradictory elements in her supernaturalistic universe and by oversimplifying the similarities, Sanapia possesses a flexibility which confounds any attempt to present a very cogent description of her "religion." If a key pervasive theme had to be chosen, it probably would be concerned with the idea of supernatural power and the desirability of its acquisition and control. 115 159 756 771 [778]

A Successor

At the present time Sanapia is beginning to consider the problem of a successor, for she feels that her doctoring career is rapidly approaching its final 115 159 756 593

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775 then unwraps her medicines and exposes them on the cloth in which they were
755 wrapped.
756 Both Sanapia and her patient smoke Bull Durham tobacco wrapped in corn
782 shucks as they wait for the sun to rise. Sanapia prays to the earth immediately
[274] before sunrise, and when the sun appears, she directs her prayers to it.

> In the morning, before the sun come up, you go out away from the house, where nobody can hear you and you pray. You touch the ground with your hands, four times, and say . . . I don't know where it came from, but you say, "Mother earth, I want you to take my words. I want you to do what I want. I'm walking over you. I live on you, and I love you because you're my land." Say things like that to it. That sun not up yet. But it's the big eagle . . . talk to it like it's eagle . . . think of it like that, you know. It's going to fly up pretty soon when the sun comes up, and that's the eagle going to do everything I want.

776 The sun and the earth were the two greatest sources of power in the
821 nomadic Comanche culture. Wallace and Hoebel (1952:190) write that ". . . only
823 the sun, moon, and earth were looked upon as semi-dieties." They were also personified and addressed in prayer. The earth was considered second only to the sun in supernatural importance by the Comanches; however, though they were active in the affairs of men, neither the sun nor the earth gave personal power (Wallace and Hoebel 1952:195–197). Also in the content of the pages just cited are numerous mentions of the earth being addressed as "mother" by the Comanches. Kardiner (1945:63), when discussing Comanche beliefs associated with magic and power, writes: "The greatest powers were the earth, and the sun, with which the eagle was felt to be associated."

775 When the sun appears over the horizon, Sanapia begins her prayers in
755 which she will ask "the eagle" to aid her in healing her patient. The patient,
756 seated beside her, is instructed to pray for his recovery and to put his faith and
782 trust in the powers of the earth and sun. She also indicates her medicines, exposed to the sun, and asks that it will fill them with power.

This period of prayer, first to the earth and then to the rising sun, lasts
[372] about half an hour, or until the sun has completely cleared the horizon. Sanapia then takes her patient back to her house, where her hubsnd or son have already prepared the pecan wood coals which Sanapia will need when she begins to doctor.
[824] Pecan coals are desired because they form long-burning, even coals. At this time
237 she will attach her crow feather amulet to a beam on her front porch. She some-
[778] times affixes several crow feathers to her patient's wrist.

As mentioned previously, in doctoring, Sanapia is alone with her patient.
775 If she is in a tent or tepee, she sits on the south side of the tent, which is custom-
755 arily facing east, and positions her patient directly in front of her. He lies on his
756 back with his head toward the west. The medicines she will use are placed to
[823] her right, and the pecan coals are placed in an iron kettle or shovel so their position can be changed as Sanapia doctors. When she is in a house, she attempts to duplicate these conditions as closely as possible.

After her patient is situated, Sanapia begins her attempt to mobilize her